



**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

Office of Public Affairs  
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-7600  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

# **News Release**

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## **Federal Agencies Share Latest Research on Polytrauma and Reintegration at Conference**

WASHINGTON – Helping severely wounded Veterans and Servicemembers recover and reintegrate into their families and communities was the theme of a joint Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) two-day conference at the NIH campus in Bethesda, Md.

“One of our highest priorities in VA is to provide the best possible care and support for our Veterans who have sustained severe, disabling injuries and sacrificed so much for our Nation,” said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Robert Petzel.

The conference--the Third Annual Trauma Spectrum Disorders Conference: Emerging Research on Polytrauma, Recovery and Reintegration of Servicemembers, Veterans and Their Families--is a forum for leading experts from VA, DCoE and NIH to share the latest approaches in research and care focused on polytrauma—multiple, severe wounds—and related issues such as limb loss, traumatic brain injury, and posttraumatic stress disorder.

The scientific conference is part of an ongoing joint effort, started in 2008, with the goal of advancing treatment for those with a trauma spectrum disorder. The conference ran Dec. 7-8.

“These annual conferences are a prime opportunity for our investigators and clinicians to exchange ideas and knowledge with their colleagues in the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury and the National Institutes of Health, said Petzel. “They are critical to the progress we have been making in this area.”

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## **Polytrauma Conference 2/2/2/2**

This year's keynote speaker, Dr. Elaine Peskind, with VA and the University of Washington in Seattle, described her work using sophisticated brain scans—such as positron emission tomography—to understand the long-term effects of traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Another presentation focused on futuristic “Smart Home” technology that is now being evaluated at the Polytrauma Transitional Rehabilitation Program at the Tampa VA Medical Center. The interactive system uses sensors, tracking software and other technologies to provide memory cues, boost mobility, and promote a range of other clinical goals.

Researcher Jan Jasiewicz, Ph.D., described the system as a “cognitive prosthetic” that enhances rehabilitation and improves safety round-the-clock for those with TBI. He said the system is expected to shorten recovery times and shows how “VA is in the vanguard of implementing technology for the benefit of Veterans.”

A further highlight of the conference was a presentation by Gregory Goodrich, Ph.D., of the VA Palo Alto Healthcare System, on vision problems relating to TBI. At least 6,000 Veterans are affected by visual problems related to TBI, said Goodrich. He described efforts to develop new tests and therapies to detect and treat many serious conditions.

Delivering introductory remarks at the conference, VA Chief Research and Development Officer Dr. Joel Kupersmith emphasized the importance of collaboration among federal partners.

“Today's meeting is a unique opportunity to collaboratively develop evidence-based, innovative advancements that empower and support our Veterans and their families,” said Kupersmith. “VA is committed to working with the Defense Center of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury, the National Institutes of Health, and other federal and private sector partners to achieve this important result.”

Other conference highlights included a dynamic panel discussion by Servicemembers who have recovered from polytrauma, and presentations on acute psychological and TBI care in theater; rehabilitation care at the Vision, Hearing and Extremity Blast Centers of Excellence; new clinical approaches for polytrauma care; and family and caregiving programs to support reintegration.

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## **Background on Partners**

The VA Research and Development program, part of an integrated health care system with a state-of-the-art electronic health record, conducts research that advances Veterans' health care, benefits Veterans' family members and caregivers, and advances the nation's medical knowledge and care practices. For additional information about the VA Research program, visit [www.research.va.gov](http://www.research.va.gov).

The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) mission is to assess, validate, oversee, and facilitate prevention, resilience, identification, treatment, outreach, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs for psychological health and traumatic brain injury to ensure the Department of Defense meets the needs of the nation's military communities, warriors and families. For more information on the DCoE, go to <http://dcoe.health.mil>.

The Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH), Office of the Director, NIH serves as a focal point for women's health research at NIH. For more information about NIH's Office of Research on Women's Health, visit <http://orwh.od.nih.gov>.